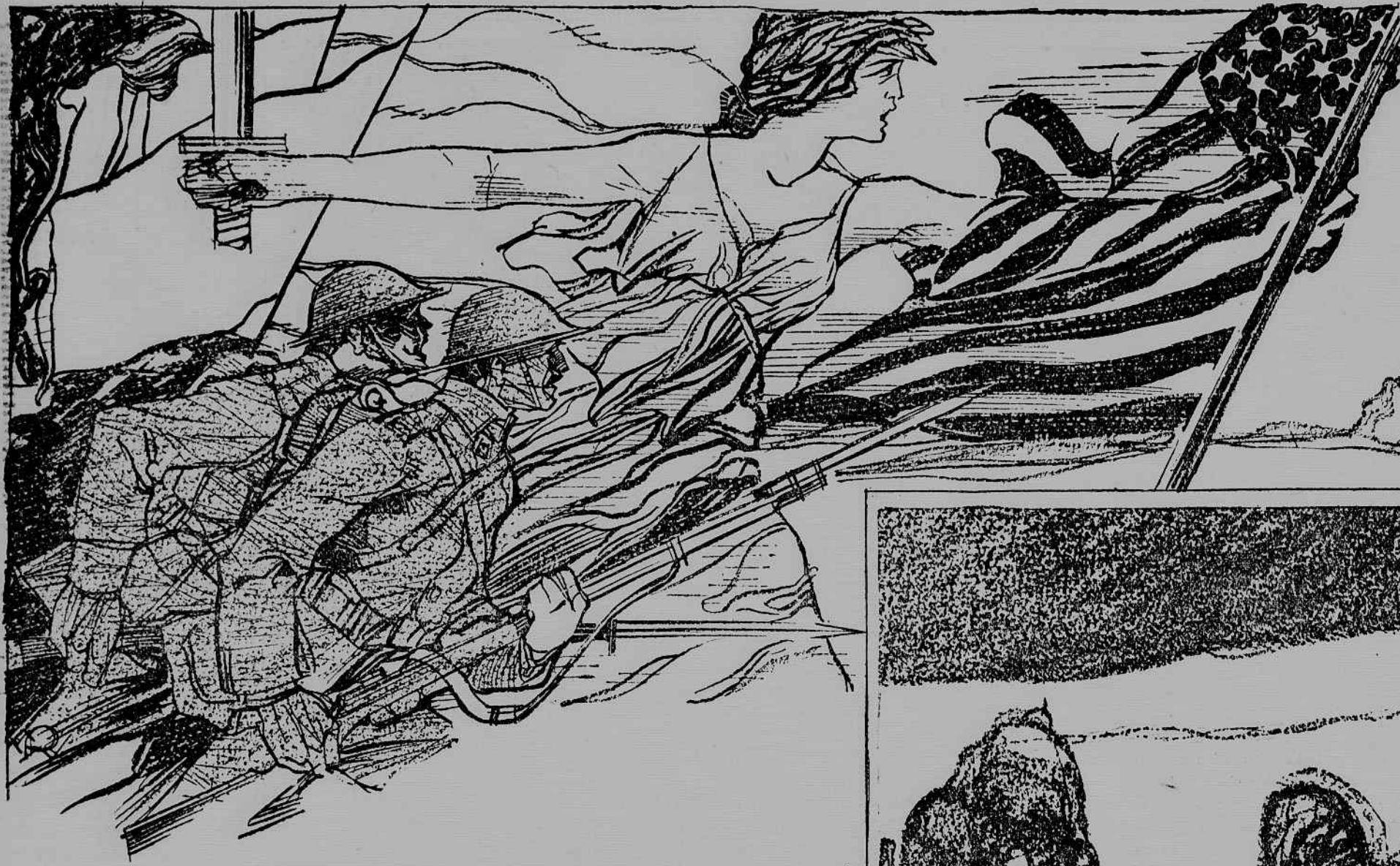


# SLAVS WANT OWN FOREIGN LEGION IN U. S. ARMY



## Promoters of Patriotic Enterprise Say if Teuton Stigma Is Taken Off These Technially Austrian Subjects 500,000 Are Ready to Fight Under the American Flag

By Caroline Dawes Appleton

FROM factory mouth and mine pit, from field and workshop throughout America a strange and as yet somewhat unwieldy stream is pouring into the nation's service. It is a mighty flow of molten patriotism, white hot and susceptible of being cast in the mould of a new and powerful war machine. But at present it is unguided, annealing rapidly, in grave danger of chilling into a formless mass of useless, finely tempered metal.

The Slavic immigrant, Pole, Czech and Jugo-Slav, refugee from generations of oppression by the Central Powers, has found the freedom of his soul. Fired by the accumulated resentment of years of servitude, inflamed by the sufferings of his bonded kinsmen overseas, who are forced to fight and die in the support of a rule they detest, the Slav in America, as in France and England, has gathered his brothers about him and declared his readiness to league the fervor and force of his ancient fighting race with the modern war skilled legions of democracy.

France has already tested and proved the valiant strength of her foreign legion of Poles, Czechs and Jugo-Slavs. England, slower to absorb the essential foreignness of these volunteers, at length grasped hands with her Slavic immigrant. But America, it appears, is slower still to recognize and use the mighty idle weapon at her hand.

Already thousands of Slavs have lost their lives fighting under the banners of France and Italy. Nearly 12,000 Poles died upholding the traditions of the famous Foreign Legion. The Polish Legion in France has been depleted and recruited so often that no record of the men who have passed through its ranks is available, but to-day it numbers 25,000 men—all volunteers. Fighting in France, too, are 20,000 Czech-Slovaks, while 50,000 more of these escaped Austrian subjects are under arms in Italy. There is besides a "lost army" of 15,000 Jugo-Slavs in Russia—also men escaped from Austria—who fate nothing is known here. The Legion of Polish Volunteers in America, in addition to those who have gone to join the colors in France, now numbers more than 6,000.

"The Slav is a fire—a living fire!" is the slogan passed down from father to son through all the generations which have longed and suffered for freedom. Alike on the plains of Poland and among rugged mountains of Jugo-Slavia little children are trained to worship the sacred fire of their nationalism, to sing the patriotic folk songs of their fathers, to regard themselves as but embers in the mighty leaping flame of Slavic liberty. When the way was found to relieve the immediate pressure of the hated domination of their enemies by emigration to the new world the Slav brought with him the flame of his hatred, now fanned into a scorching blast.

### Has Special Motive For Hating Teutons

Through draft boards and recruiting stations everywhere has poured the country's full quota of Slavic fighting power. From the 2,000,000 Poles, 2,000,000 Czechs and 1,000,000 Jugo-Slavs a vast army has been recruited—an army speaking little or none of the language of its adopted country, knowing less of its traditions, but an army with a motive and a cause of its own, with a private and particular hatred of the common foe before which any other anti-German sentiment pales into insignificance.

But this army is thinly scattered, widely distributed among training camps and stations, and the majority

of its members are, through a technicality of citizenship, outcast and adrift from the very cause for which they beg to be allowed to fight. By very reason of their former servitude beneath Teutonic rule, a large percentage of Slavic draftees in the National Army and enlisted men of the regular service are technically classed as "enemy aliens" and perforce treated accordingly. With those enemy aliens of avowed pro-German tendencies the madly patriotic Slav is cast into the ranks of the disloyal and denied active service on any front.

Relegated to the non-combatant branches of the service, jeered at and ridiculed by his pro-German co-workers, entirely misunderstood in his frantic protestations to be allowed a gun and something to shoot at, the ardent Slavic patriot works and perforce trains in gloomy depression. And all the while his heart flames with the wild hope that he may some day join the golden ranks of those heroes whose names Slavonia reveres.

The petty differences of factional politics which the world arbitrarily associates with Slavic uprisings are sunk in the vital spirit of fraternity in suffering and oppression. A flag, a government, a place for the sacred archives of Slavic history and a shelter for the guarded flame of national independence are the dream of each and every Slav. Whether laboring uncomprehendingly and misunderstanding in the non-combatant sections of an Allied army, whether chafing beneath the enforced trappings of an Austrian uniform, or bound with the thrall of Poland, the Slav sees only the star of his race's freedom and his hatred of the Teuton foe. Here, it would seem, is fighting material for something more organized, more coordinated, more vast than merely a foreign legion.

### An Idea Comes Out of the West

From a training camp in the Middle West where harassed officers are struggling with some thirty-odd nationalities and as many languages, the germ of an idea came into existence in the mind of a high ranking officer. Watching with absorption the phlegmatic or overhushed activities of his motley official family, he caught one day the gleam of that "living fire" which is Slavonia.

On a gusty night, walking alone among the outposts of the camp, turning in his mind the thousand perplexities of the day, he heard a voice in the darkness, singing softly but with intense fervor. The officer paused. The strain was wild and gypsy-like, with a curious martial beat, and the words were guttural and unintelligible. Verse after verse poured forth, rhythmic and monotonous, fraught with a tremendous intensity. The singer paused suddenly as though interrupted, his song broken off in midair. The officer stepped forward and saw crouched at the edge of the camp, close to the barbed wire inclosure, a slender, boyish figure which sprang erect as he approached. There in the darkness the officer asked a question or two and was answered quietly and directly.

Who was the singer and what his nationality? He was a Serb from Austria.

What was he singing? What, indeed, but an extemporaneous poem which recounted the deeds of his great ancestors.

And who were his ancestors? Great Serbian heroes, sir, who fought for the freedom of the Slav against Turk and Teuton in the past—oh, very long ago.

Then he, although an enemy alien, desired to fight against these same enemies?

In a torrent of broken English the boy declared his passionate willingness to fight any one—anywhere—that would bring about the freedom of his people. In fact, he insisted upon fighting, immediately, in the most sanguinary sectors possible!

"Do you not realize," the officer pointed out, "that if captured you will be shot for treason by your own government?"

"I suffer more here, a non-combatant, than by being tortured by an Austrian executing party!" answered the boy simply.

### Slavic Contingent Of the U. S. Army

"Well, turn in now," directed the officer, flatly. But the seed was sown. Somewhere in his memory the wild strain of that patriotic lament echoed. Its queer abrupt ending irritated him. Suddenly he remembered having heard somewhere that these people sang endlessly in this fashion, and their abrupt terminations were a part of their musical history—the result of the invariable interruptions of their meetings and song-fests by investigating parties of soldiers whose mission it was to quell these dangerous nationalistic scenes among the bonded Slav whose territories they ruled by conquest.

Smiling at his reminiscent digression into the sphere of musical history, the officer turned in his mind the feasibility of forming these countless Slavic draftees of his own and other camps into a vast Slavic army; not a foreign legion, but a Slavic contingent of the American army, to fight beneath the American flag and according to well tested systems prescribed by the regulations. But this army should be officered—at least its noncommissioned officers and a certain portion of the commissioned—should be picked men who know the language and customs of the Slav and of all the Slavic countries, and who could guide their men and fight with them in their own cause, which, after all, is identical with ours.

The plan is big. With the recent uprisings in Bohemia, the presentation to the State Department of the organized movement whose object is the sys-

tematic encouragement of these patriotic demonstrations in Austria, the military feasibility of the plan increases. Immigration and citizenship experts as well as military are concentrating upon the upbuilding and maintenance of the Slavic spirit which appears to be so rapidly dissipating under the adverse conditions of the training camp.

### And He Is Mentally Overlooked

It has been remarked that the various societies and the elaborate and effective systems which have been established in the various training camps for the amusement and recreation of the men treat with the foreign speaking soldier not at all. Lectures and plays in English he cannot understand; the camp library is a closed door to him; his mind is continuously fogged regarding the issues and progress of the war, and he is conscious only of living to do what he considers to be menial and unworthy labor beneath a stigma of citizenship which he can never overcome and which forever bars him from active service.

But the acuteness of the situation has become so marked as to attract the necessary attention of the government. Plans are afoot to provide the Slav with the mass meetings his heart thrives upon; the native speakers to thrill him and keep alive in him the great spirit of his people, and eventually to make him part of the vast army which shall deal justice and retribution to his oppressors—perhaps by descending upon them through the eastern gateway to Russia.

Many tales, pathetic, amusing and even tragic, are told of the training camp situation, while the wheels of government revolve to control and relieve the tension.

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"THAT WILL DO!" declared his commander with finality.

Well accustomed to injustices, military and judicial, the Croatian of this instance harbored the conviction that his race was once again the victim of official insult. When assigned in his turn to a tour of kitchen police he regarded it as a peculiar and added affront unequalled by anything save the rankest Prussianism. Wherefore, he and his comrades speedily became examples of martyred rebellion, whose fame could not fail to spread from camp to camp among relatives and friends until once again the cruel oppression of the Slavic race in general because the fiery slogan which incited fraternal orders and societies to more vehement demonstrations of their

But suddenly, over and above them all, sounded the clarion note for freedom—distinguished the Slavic cry for freedom as of deeper, more intensely national origin than the lesser wailings of the usual, discontented foreigner. It came and souped through the sleeping camp on the eve of the Orthodox Christmas, about the 10th of January. It was a muffled rifle shot. A startled investigating party found him, stretched upon his own weapon, which he had turned upon himself in the desperate conviction that his technical status as the alien enemy both of his own people and of the service in which he had enlisted would forever bar him from that active service overseas upon which his life's whole interest hung.

The sound of that shot has pene-

trance of music and childhood wherever Slavic homes live and hope for future freedom.

"I am a Slav—a living fire!" a living fire! chants a childish voice that could sing to you by the hour of the heroic deeds of his ancestors who fought and died and left behind him the glory of his name and the flame of the sacred fire. A fire, unquenchable, indomitable is the metaphorical soul which the Slav treasures above all earthly wealth.

"Slavonia is a fire—a living fire!" is the slogan muttered in the wet dark of Austrian trenches where weary sentries peer into the darkness, not for a spying enemy but for the listening Austrian, who is more than enemy, and whose uniform they wear. Meetings, conferences, those gatherings of patriotic sympathy which have kept the fire alive, are held in dugouts in the very teeth of the Austrian defenses where Poles and Czechs and the little mountain men whose heritage is among the ancient rocky heights of Montenegro curse the bondage which drives them forth to fight the battles of their enemies.

In a memorandum prepared by a ranking officer of the United States Army, who has made an exhaustive study of the situation, he states what he considers to be an effective plan for the "organization of Slavs in America and Europe against the Central Powers." He says in part:

### An Army Plan for Using Their Energies

"To get any real promise of adequate results in the tremendous operations that are possible on the Eastern front there must be a complete organization under a competent military officer. He should be placed in complete command and held responsible for organizing and directing the efforts of all the Slav peoples in the United States. These are divided into two classes:

"One—Those who are conscripted into the United States Army for operations overseas from these Slavic races, and he should be authorized to have his agents in every camp where these are sent after being conscripted. Two—He should also have charge of the organization, coordination and direction of the efforts of the various Slavic Councils in the United States. This latter includes the organization and direction of all propaganda that may be sent out.

"The high grade mentioned should be accorded because of the beneficial effect this grade will have upon all Slavic peoples in this country as well as abroad; and as a second reason because, should he go abroad to assume command of any allied expeditions (which, of course, must be contemplated), there would be no question about his being a senior in grade to all commanders of these allied forces coming under his command. He must be senior to all such officers, because his work must be taken over—if we are to secure success—by the American government, and the sooner this fact is recognized the better for all concerned.

"The sooner this officer is selected and authorized to commence his organization the more promptly he will secure results.

"It goes without saying that this entire proposition must be taken up with the governments of Great Britain, France and Italy and he should be given proper recognition before these governments on all proper occasions.

"The first thing to be done, of course, is to complete our organization at home and to advise these councils of the various Slavic races here exactly what the United States government is prepared to do, both as to the handling of the enemy allied situation and the recognition that will be accorded to them now and at the final peace conference.

"The qualifications of the military man who should be placed in charge of this have previously been given and it should be emphasized that this job is an entire new thing, and that of the man in command on the Western front. The knowledge in Washington of the capabilities of the army men to decide upon the proper person.

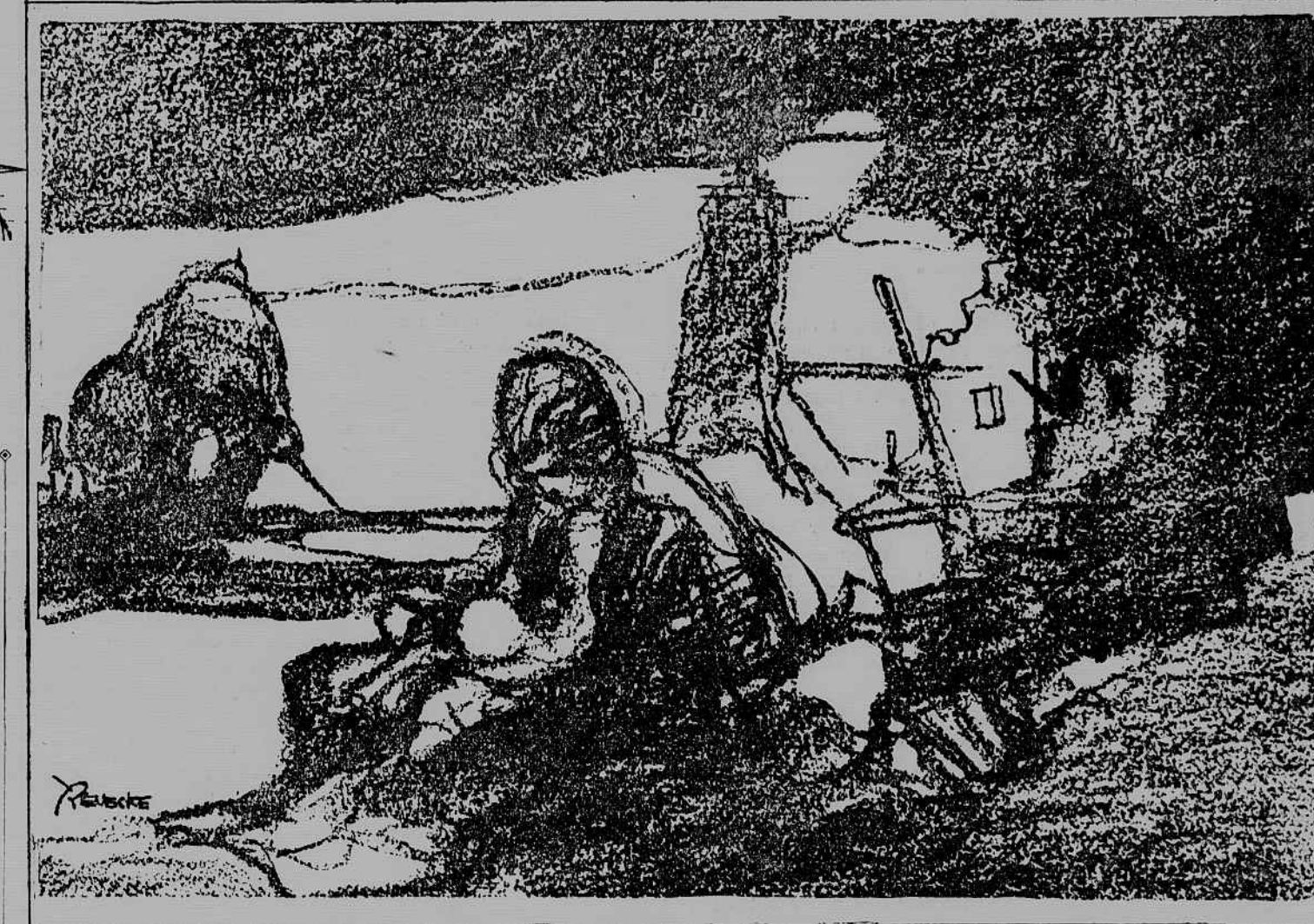
### One Slav Body Opposes the Plan

The one Slavic organization which is opposing the organization of Slavic legions is the Polish National Defence Committee, which was organized in 1912 for the purpose of aiding the movement for independent Poland. From the first funds were forwarded to Joseph Pilsudski, now General Pilsudski, for the purpose of aiding the maintenance of the military schools in Poland organized by him.

Pilsudski used the money for the formation of secret military schools for the training of Polish youth. At the present war started he headed a small army. Since the great fight of Poland was directed against Russia, General Pilsudski, the Polish Legion, with the aid of the Polish government, refused to fight Russia. As a result the Germans imprisoned him in the Fortress of Magdeburg, together with 20,000 men of his army.

"The committee anticipated the entrance of the United States into the world war," said Dr. B. D. Kulakowski, editor of "Wici," official organ of the Polish National Defence Committee. "For this reason we did not ally ourselves politically either with Great Britain or with France. We opposed the formation of Polish military units on the side of the Allies, or in the United States. An army is one of the attributes of the sovereignty of a state and is the force guaranteeing the independence of a nation. It is in the interest of Poland that the United States be militarily strong and efficient. The splitting up of the uniform military organization of the United States into Italian, Greek, Polish, Armenian, Syrian or Jewish armies would be tantamount to complete chaos.

"Those who wanted to serve reactionary political ends, who denounced Pilsudski and his followers as Prussian mercenaries, must now admit their error. The only belligerent on American soil is the Government of the United States. We urged all the members of our committee, and there are over 10,000 of them, at the time of the entrance of this country into the war to prove by their acts that the Poles in America are conscious of their duty toward this country and of the Polish tradition of fighting for 'our and your freedom.'"



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weary with explaining over and over his simplest commands to a score or more extremely foreign members of his company, and suddenly realizing that after all these were technically enemy aliens and never to utilize their arduous training in any active fashion, gave way to his exasperation.

### The Old Mistake Was Made Again

They understood this time. Under the suppressed laughter of a hundred odd of their more Americanized fellows, the handful of Poles, Czechs and Austro-Serbs looked at each other sullenly and morosely. The old mistake had been made again. In that silent exchange of glances they picked their leader. After drill he approached his commander respectfully.

"Sir," he said, "I and my brothers are indignant. Again we are treated as enemies and traitors. I'm not an Austrian. I am Croat—two of them are Austro-Serbs—ten of them are Czechs from Bohemia—another a Serb from—"

"Nothing of the kind!" snapped the exasperated officer. "You're all Austrians. There may be political differences and all that in your own country—you're always kicking up some kind of a row over there—but you're all cut of the same piece of cloth. I can't stop to argue with you. Either you're an American, an alien or an enemy alien."

"No, no! I am a Croat—a Slav—my people have always fought; why, sir, the first two prisoners taken by the American Army in France were taken by Poles!"

determination for the liberation of their kind, under any and all circumstances and governments.

Patriotic fervors, self-sacrifices and self-abnegations have arisen and transpired in impassioned sequence.

### The Slav Note Brings an Answer

One man, practically ignorant of the English language, enlisted because he had gathered the impression that the cause which America had espoused was the cause of his own freedom. Arriving at a training camp and being promptly classed with the enemy aliens whom he hated and despised, he abandoned a particularly offensive round of kitchen police and in "unbefitting terms" addressed his commanding officer. He declared wildly that he had entered the army to fight, not to slave in a kitchen, and that he desired most earnestly to be sent to France, Italy, anywhere, immediately, and thus be removed from the hateful society of his fellow soldiers, who happened to be of most pronounced pro-German tendencies. When reprimanded for insubordinate conduct he retired, to suffer acutely, but not in silence. He wrote at random to everyone he knew describing the cruel injustice of his position, which, needless to say, was not apparent to his commanders, overtaken as they were with the strain of trimmings to the rigid olive drab confines of the service the variegated and very raw material in hand. The age-old wrongs of a hot-hearted Slavic patriot, while forming the essential leaven of the loaf of Slavic emancipation, failed to impress the military authorities as unusual, and his periodical protests, arriving invariably with his tour of kitchen police, were hastily classed with the other unintelligible complaints which reached their ears daily in some thirty-five languages.

trained to the furthest corners of the country's understanding. America has come to look upon the Slav with new and somewhat wondering eyes; to assume somewhat her own share of the responsibility of the lack of comprehension in which she has been at fault as well as the failure of the Slav within her gates to adequately express himself in the new tongue, or to adequately inform himself of the traditions of the new country.

### The Most Difficult To Assimilate

The Slavic immigrant has lost, perhaps less than any other, his nationalistic tendencies and enthusiasms. He is difficult, if not impossible, to assimilate, and that which so definitely declines to assimilate is scarcely popular in America.

The first thought to be carefully impressed upon the arriving immigrant is the importance of his immediate Americanization. This had been a definitely constructive policy upon which much of the country's present unity depends. The Slav demonstrates thoroughly and courteously his willingness to be Americanized, but not his willingness to be assimilated. It is his proudest boast that though Slavonia is at present a nation without freedom, the Slavic race has never been assimilated by any other. He maintains that the strength of his race lies in the very stubbornness of his determination to become nothing and remain a Slav.

Certain military and civil authorities of the United States government have come recently to believe that in that strength may possibly lie the greatest weapons of all those various and startlingly discovered defenses and resources which America has revealed beneath the developing processes of the war. The old question which has taxed the brain of immigration experts, as to the feasibility of incorporating into the nation's existence these unassimilated foreigners, is sunk into oblivion before the military importance of utilizing a ready-made nationalism which has its own peculiar and intensified reasons for hating and fighting the common foe.

For this assimilation of the undeniably rich resources of the Slavic temperament and energies, the Central Powers, foreseeing the present situation no doubt, have struggled with increasing perturbation since Bismarck's drastic step immediately after the Franco-Prussian war. The Iron Chancellor first proclaimed the imperative necessity of absorbing the Slavic race, primarily by the abolition of its language, dialects and customs throughout central Europe.

### The Language of Hope and Freedom

With ponderous German textbooks and their systems of pedagogy flourishing in an overnight growth through Bohemia and Jugo-Slavia, the Slavic tongue slipped into the intimate channels of love, home, laughter and music, and with the indomitable spirit of its origin it has laughed softly and resonantly throughout the years, the song language, the love language, the lan-

### THE GATHERING OF THE POLISH LEGION



Part of the thousands of Polish volunteers who gathered near Buffalo to begin their training for service on the Western front.